

**Governor's Rural Affairs Council
Meeting Minutes – July 18, 2018**

1. **The meeting was called to order by Lt. Governor Evelyn Sanguinetti at 3:00 pm.** Lt. Governor announced that if members of the public are in attendance, and are interested in providing remarks to the council, they should please sign in with Brian Costin.
2. **Roll Call**

Member Agencies Present:

Illinois Department of Aging, Leann Dolan (phone)
Illinois Department of Agriculture, Warren Goetsch
Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, Erika Kennett
Illinois Department of Employment Security, Shelly Tweedy
Illinois Department of Human Services, Francisco Alvarado (phone)
Illinois Department of Public Health, Don Jones
Illinois Department of Transportation, Mike Vanderhoof
Illinois Environmental Protection Agency, Amy Walkenbach
Illinois Community College Board, Karen Hunter Anderson
Illinois Finance Authority, Patrick Evans
University of Illinois Cooperative Extension Service, Anne Silvis
Illinois Housing Development Authority, Melinda Koenig (phone)
Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs, Christopher Merrett
Rural Partners, Blanche Shoup (phone)
Ed Cross, Illinois Department of Natural Resources (phone)

Not Present: Illinois State Board of Education, Illinois Farm Bureau, Southern Illinois University—Center for Rural Health & Social Service Development.

Citizen Members Present:

Luke Allen
Sonja Reece
Todd Kaeb (phone)

Nonvoting Members Present:

Norman Walzer, NIU

Lt. Governor's Office Present:

Evelyn Sanguinetti
Derek Cantu
Brian Costin

Quorum determined.

3. Opening Remarks

Lt. Governor Sanguinetti welcomed everyone to the quarterly meeting of the Governor's Rural Affairs Council. She expressed her excitement to be able to work with so many supporters of innovative rural development initiatives to improve the quality of life in rural Illinois.

The Lt. Governor mentioned that Larry Richards was not able to attend today due to a family emergency. She requested that everyone keep Larry in their thoughts and prayers during this time.

4. Approval of Meeting Minutes from July 19, 2017.

Lt. Governor Sanguinetti announced that a draft of the minutes from the May meeting had been provided to council members prior to today's meeting along with a hard copy today. She inquired if there were any corrections to the minutes.

Patrick Evans asked it be noted that he was present at the meeting. The Lt. Governor requested a motion to approve the minutes with corrections. Don Jones made a motion to approve the minutes. The motion was seconded by Sonja Reece. Motion passed. Minutes were approved.

5. Annual Report Discussion – Chris Merrett

Lt. Governor Sanguinetti explained that the GRAC has a Memorandum of Understanding with the Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs to expand the GRAC's research relationship with Chris Merrett and his team at WIU. She further explained that Chris continues to organize a detailed analysis of rural health, rural elementary and secondary education, rural workforce development, and rural economic development for the annual report.

She noted that this is one of the most important reports that the GRAC does. These reports help ensure that the GRAC is providing a data driven report to help with recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly. She stated that a draft of the report had been emailed to all members of the council and that there was also a handout of the report available today. She mentioned on Page 7, there is a data discrepancy and this part will be included in the final report once data has been verified. She also noted that only four agencies have not submitted their report summaries to Chris Merrett. She reminded everyone that the report is due August 1, so if GRAC member agencies wish to have their respective summaries to be included in the final report, it is due to Chris or her office this week.

She requested that Chris provide an update.

Chris Merrett thanked everyone who has submitted reports for their respective agencies. He also thanked Brian Costin for his help in assembling the document. He explained that there are two main themes of the report: Demographics and Economic Development.

Regarding demographics, Chris noted there is an ongoing decline of the rural Illinois population and young people are the fastest shrinking age cohort. The report will make recommendations on how to engage and retain youth, and possibly even recruit youth from neighboring states.

As for Economic Development, the primary point is the need to diversify the rural Illinois economy. A common mistake made by many is to equate rural only with agriculture. Farming is very important. However, rural Illinois also includes manufacturing, retail, education, health care, and other sectors. He explained that many farm families need off farm employment to survive. Chris called attention to a few of the tables included in the report highlighting the point that economically diverse regions of rural Illinois experienced the lowest levels of population decline. He also mentioned that the new Opportunity Zones Initiative could have important rural development impacts.

Chris further noted the ongoing healthcare challenges created by opioid misuse. Finally, Chris ended his comments by mentioning how technology may be able to help bridge the gap between urban and rural school quality.

Lt. Governor Sanguinetti thanked Chris for all of his hard work. She is eager to file the report, which will describe all of the great work that the GRAC has completed over the last year. She asked everyone present or on the phone to describe a brief summary of the report that was submitted from their agency.

Francisco Alvarado explained that the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) focused on increasing the access people have to IDHS services in rural Illinois. The IDHS is exploring how technology can help improve human services delivery.

Karen Hunter Anderson, Illinois Community College Board (ICCB), stated their focus was to improve access and educational programs in rural area. This includes increasing online programs that are offered as well as special interest programs. She also noted that the ICCB also focuses on IT, Healthcare, and AG jobs along with adult education classes for those needing to complete a GED or similar program.

Melinda Koenig provided updates of the programs available from the Illinois Housing Development Authority. A new program will focus on Community Revitalization Services.

Lt. Governor Sanguinetti thanked those who had reported over the phone. Since there are no other phone reports, she asked members present to report on their agency summaries.

Warren Goetsch summarized the Department of Ag's Bicentennial Farm Program. He explained future challenges for Ag include the upcoming projected number of job openings and the projected shortage of qualified employees. He also noted the shortage of Ag teachers.

Amy Walkenbach stated the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency is focusing on a pilot program for Small Municipalities Systems Compliance. This program will assist small waste water facilities with compliance issues.

Anne Heinze Silvis explained that U of I Extension is focusing on Community, Economy, Environment, and Health. More details are available on the University of Illinois Extension website.

Mike Vanderhoof stated that IDOT is focusing on rural Illinois transportation including aviation, rail, and freight. He provided details of areas that have been improved and stated that the freight plan has been recently completed.

The freight plan is important because it updates IDOT's understanding of freight flows across Illinois roads, railways, and waterways, evaluates the status of the Illinois intermodal transport system, creates an inventory of warehousing and other supporting aspects of the freight system, and attempts to identify current and future bottlenecks to improve the flow of goods across the state.

Don Jones explained that the Illinois Department of Public Health is focusing on the Center for Rural Health. He explained that shortages of primary physicians, dentists, and behavioral counseling centers are both rural and urban issues. His department is monitoring the shortage of rural health care professionals and the potential for reduced services to rural areas. He mentioned there are current programs which provide financial aid to students pursuing nursing or medical degrees in exchange for working in a shortage area for a period of time.

The Lt. Governor stated that the "Brain Drain" is a very real issue. The goal is to keep young people living in Illinois. She also mentioned there is a new task force for Telemedicine to improve healthcare access in rural areas.

Chris Merrett thanked Don Jones for the excellent data that is available on the Illinois Department of Public Health's website.

Chris noted that the Chronicle of Higher Education is also discussing areas in Illinois with "educational" deserts. He announced that the IIRA will open a new Procurement Technical Assistance Center in the Quad Cities which will help local businesses sell to state and federal governments.

Shelly Tweedy, Illinois Department of Employment Security announced that the Illinois unemployment application has been redesigned to make it easier to use online.

Luke Allen mentioned that Ag Education is increasing the number of teachers in Ag Programs. In addition, some of these teachers are now employed in 12-month positions. He noted that there are 1,395 more students enrolled in Ag Programs than last year.

Patrick Evans, Illinois Finance Authority, explained what his organization does and emphasized new programs available including a bond program for young farmers.

Norm Walzer explained he is working on a new initiative involving succession planning.

The Lt. Governor thanked everyone for their continued work on rural issues. When the GRAC report is ready everyone will received an email. In addition, there will be hard copies available at the Springfield or Chicago offices.

She requested that everyone review the report and send edits to her office or to Chris Merrett by next Wednesday, July 25. She requested a motion to accept the report with edits to be made.

Sonja Reece made a motion to accept the report with pending edits. Luke Allen seconded the motion. The motion was approved.

6. Norm Walzer

Lt. Governor Sanguinetti invited Norm Walzer to proceed with his presentation on “Modernizing the Delivery of Local Public Services to Meet Changing Needs.” Norm explained he previously submitted a summary of this at the March GRAC meeting. Norm explained that his project consists of a set of online tools to help local governments to prepare for the decrease in population and for the increase in aging populations. Tools will help local communities compare themselves to other communities or counties across the state on various measures such as local tax burden and how to more effectively deliver public services in the face of declining local tax revenues.

The Lt. Governor thanked Norm for his presentation and stated she is eager to see the finished product.

Todd Kaab thanked Norm for a great presentation and inquired if he thinks local governments will use this or if he thinks a company/facilitator will be presenting this product to local levels.

Norm explained that he could see both options as becoming viable.

Sonja Reece said she is intrigued and can’t wait to see it completed. Norm explained it needs a little polishing and then it should be available for use on the website.

Shelley Tweedy followed up on Norm's point that some communities are converting vacant school buildings into elder housing facilities. She mentioned that school consolidation is a challenge for rural communities. Communities currently confronting the possibility of losing their school through consolidation are renovating their school facilities. They hope that if their school has the best facilities, their school will be chosen to become the consolidated school. If their school is not chosen, community leaders fear that the town will dissolve due to loss of a school. She noted that consolidations are being considered currently due to teacher shortages instead of funding.

The Lt. Governor thanked Norm again.

7. U.S. Census 2020

Lt. Governor Sanguinetti introduced Shawn Healy of the McCormick Foundation and Anita Banerji of the Forefront Democracy Initiative to explain how the GRAC can help with the Census 2020. She announced that the Governor, she, and various other agencies have been busy working on the census.

Anita Banerji explained that Forefront is working to ensure that there is an accurate counting of Illinois residents. The program is called "ILCountMeIn2020." Anita noted that if there are fewer people in Illinois it could result in the loss of one or two congressional districts. Illinois has lost six seats since 1960.

Currently, Illinois loses \$1,800 for every uncounted individual in terms of federal funding. She also explains how someone could not be counted. She explained that communication is the key. The program will be launching on September 20, 2018.

Anita explained that most of the count will be completed online this year. Problems may result with groups of individuals who are less likely to have internet access such as Amish or Latino populations. This will result in trying to gain this information from places they do populate such as schools, grocery stores, churches, etc.

Anita also noted that currently the form is being developed so that the wording will not scare undocumented immigrants to be afraid to complete for fear of deportation. Sean noted that normally is not an issue since the Census Bureau cannot share individual information with the justice department.

The Lt. Governor thanked both Shawn and Anita for their great report and wealth of information.

She announced that her office will provide announcements both in English and Spanish.

Patrick Evans asked what can be shared? What information is legal?

Brian Costin stated that currently they are going through the process to reach out to agencies to determine what is appropriate to share. This will be reported to the Census Bureau through the Secretary of State.

Lt. Governor thanked everyone again. She noted that the members of GRAC have a power as a council to be the messenger to make sure that everyone is counted.

8. New Business

The Lt. Governor announced the following dates for the 2018 GRAC meetings:

- a. 12/5/18 – TBA

Calendar items:

- a. Illinois State Fair – August 9-19, 2018
- b. DuQuoin State Fair – August 24 – September 3, 2018
- c. Farm Progress Show – August 28-30, 2018

9. Member Updates and Reports

Lt. Governor Sanguinetti asked if there were any other updates from members.

Mike Vanderhoof stated that during 2016-2017 there were 1000 traffic related deaths. This year appears to be following the same path. On October 23, IDOT will hold a meeting for stakeholders to discuss opportunities to reinvigorate a statewide collaboration on the issue of distracted driving. If you would like information, please contact him.

10. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

11. Adjournment

The Lt. Governor thanked everyone for their time and dedication. As a reminder if you wish to be on the agenda for future meetings, please contact Brian Costin.

Norm Walzer made a motion to adjourn. Sonja Reece seconded the motion. Motion passed. The meeting was adjourned at 5 pm.

Respectfully Submitted:

Chris Merrett
Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs
Western Illinois University